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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

1385 Hancock Street, Quincy, Mass. 02169

A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Submitted to the

GOVERNOR

and

LEGISLATURE

of the

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

December 31, 1985

In compliance with Section 22 of Chapter 188, the Public School Improvement Act of 1985.

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INTRODUCTION

Section 22 of the Public School Improvement Act of 1985 authorizes and directs the State Board of Education to prepare and present to the Governor and the Joint Committee on Education no later than December 31, 1985 a management plan that

- addresses the responsibilities and requirements placed on the Department by Chapter 188;
- assesses the use of existing staff and resources;
- reflects the role of the Department as a service provider to local districts;
- recommends legislation for implementing the management plan.

The Board and Department initiated a management study to help develop this plan, using \$100,000 provided by the Legislature. The study found that the basic structure of the Board and Department is sound. It then made a number of recommendations for implementing Chapter 188 and for strengthening the Board and Department that have been incorporated into the plan.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Chapter 188's sweeping and powerful initiatives offer an opportunity unlike that presented by school reform legislation in most other states. The Act focuses less on the state's role in improving public education than on the role of the local school. Thus, Chapter 188 lays a foundation for new linkages between state and local decision making.

Changes in Board and Department leadership offer further challenges and opportunities. Commissioner John H. Lawson has announced his retirement, which has initiated a search for a new Commissioner. Chapter 188 empowers the Governor to appoint the Board Chair; and appointments of four new Board members have recently been announced. Thus, the plan is a vehicle by which new leadership on the Board and in the Department will strive to fulfill the potential of Chapter 188 while strengthening the ability to meet existing responsibilities.

Capitalizing on this opportunity will require a Board capable of policy leadership as well as a Department that is optimally organized, adequately staffed, and effectively led and managed. It will also require collaborative working relationships among the Board, the Department, the Governor, and the Joint Committee on Education. Therefore, the Board directed the management study to go beyond the legislatively mandated areas to take a comprehensive look at the operations of the Board and the Department and working relationships with the State House.

PROCESS OF PREPARING THE PLAN

The Board and Commissioner had decided to undertake a management study of the Board and Department prior to the mandate for a plan. In anticipation of the legislation it issued a Request For Proposal for a study that could also aid in the preparation of this plan. After a rigorous review process, featuring participation by representatives of the Governor and the Joint Committee on Education, the Board selected a national consulting firm -- Cresap, McCormick and Paget (CMP). The CMP staff reviewed major trends in the administration of education in other states, interviewed more than four hundred persons involved in public education in Massachusetts, and analyzed extensive Department documents and records.

The Board's review of the study has in itself justified the Legislature's investment by embodying the spirit of public participation symbolized by Chapter 188. For example, the Board

- circulated more than one thousand copies of draft study recommendations for comments to the Governor's Office, legislative leaders, school committee chairs, superintendents, regional education councils, educational associations and advocacy groups, and Department staff;
- discussed the draft with regional education councils and held open public hearings;
- sponsored meetings between CMP staff and Department staff at all levels to discuss the recommendations.

CMP's final analysis and recommendations arrived in mid-December. The Board finds that in general the recommendations offer excellent insight into means of implementing Chapter 188 and enhancing the effectiveness of the Board and Department. The Board has adopted or is considering most of the recommendations, many of which were proposed by Department staff or by educators throughout the state. Further suggestions, as well as modification of some CMP recommendations, emerged from the Board's communication with constituents and Department staff.

SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The main body of the plan -- Section I -- describes specific actions and overall strategies to implement the Act. In Section II the Board briefly presents actions to be taken to strengthen the Board and Department. These are divided into 1) actions to be taken immediately and 2) actions with more far-reaching implications to be deferred for consideration by the Board with its new membership and leadership in collaboration with the new Commissioner. Section III identifies those recommendations for which support is needed from the Governor, the Legislature or other parties. Section IV contains a concluding statement. The management study is appended as Section V.

I. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1985

Chapter 188 mandates broad reform of Massachusetts public education while providing vital new resources. The Board and Department of Education welcome the Act's opportunities for enhancing the quality of education in the Commonwealth and are committed to implementing them fully.

Implementation of the legislation began immediately on passage of the Act. As the Board and Commissioner moved to clarify and explain to educators Chapter 188's implications through information sessions, relevant Department divisions began translating the legislation into action. For example, the Department

- established procedures and certified more than \$27 million in funds for formula grant programs in equal educational opportunity, professional development, minimum teachers' salaries, and school improvement funds and councils;
- developed test materials for the Spring 1986 curriculum assessment and issued a Request for Proposal for a basic skills testing contractor;
- distributed grant application guidelines for early childhood education, essential skills, and dropout prevention programs.

This section describes additional specific actions by the Board and Department to implement Chapter 188 as well as their overall approach to making the legislation work.

A. ALIGN DEPARTMENT STAFFING AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITH NEW REQUIREMENTS

Although the responsibilities reflected in the Department's one and one-half billion dollar budget go far beyond the requirements of Chapter 188, the Act has significant implications for the Department's staffing patterns and for the responsibilities of individual bureaus and programs.

1. Assign program responsibilities required by Chapter 188.

Chapter 188 creates a number of new programs for which the Department is responsible, including

- five formula grant programs;
- seven discretionary grant programs;
- ten testing and other non-grant programs.

Prior to the study, the Commissioner had assigned responsibility for these programs to appropriate units in the Department. The management study has recommended reassigning these responsibilities within a modified organizational structure (pp. 163-167).* Pending the review of the proposed structure, the programs will be implemented according to existing assignments.

2. Adjust staffing levels and assignments to implement Chapter 188. The management study estimated the staffing levels required for Chapter 188's new roles and responsibilities (pp. 168-180). It found that total new requirements for consultants, temporary staff and permanent staff are 22.25 positions in FY 86; 34.50 positions in FY 87 (i.e., 12.25 more than FY 86); and 26.50 positions in FY 88 (8 fewer than FY 87).

The study also analyzed available data on the Department's staffing for existing functions to estimate how many of these positions can be reallocated from within the Department and how many must be obtained through additional resources. It concluded that six staff positions can be reallocated by eliminating the position of Executive Assistant to the Executive Deputy Commissioner, discontinuing the Immigration and Americanization Program (freeing four positions), and reducing professional staff in the Equal Educational Opportunity Bureau by one position (p. 168). The study also recommends creating one new position -- Executive Assistant to the Board.

The Board agrees that five positions may be reallocated, provided that the Department is relieved of the responsibility of administering the Immigration and Americanization program and allowed to reassign the staff. The Board also endorses the creation of the position of Executive Assistant to the Board and will explore this with the new Commissioner. This leaves a balance of four positions available for reallocation. The Board finds insufficient basis for eliminating a position in the important EEO area. And it finds no evidence in the study to support altering the Department's estimate of additional staff needed in FY 87 from 38 to 34.5 positions.

Consequently, the Department's FY 87 budget request can be amended from 38 to 34 positions to reflect a net reallocation of four positions. Only 23 of these positions will be full-time permanent staff; the remaining 15 will be used for consultants and temporary staff to meet short-term needs.

* All page references are to the appended management study.

The Board did not anticipate that substantial staff reallocations would be possible. The Department has lost 183 staff (19% of the total) since 1980, while demands for its services have risen. For example, the number of districts requesting desegregation assistance has gone from four to fifteen in the five-year period since Proposition 2 1/2. However, the Board will direct the Commissioner to conduct a further analysis of staffing requirements in the EEO Bureau and elsewhere, as recommended by the management study (pp. 169-170). The analysis will also look further at the Department staffing necessary to support school committees in conducting the teacher evaluations mandated by the legislation. To conserve time and expense, the analysis will be conducted by the Department rather than by independent consultants. Results will be available in time to make any necessary adjustments in requested staff for the FY 88 budget.

3. Employ staff with relevant technical skills to implement Chapter 188. The study confirmed that to successfully implement the mandates of Chapter 188 the Department will require additional expertise in a number of areas (pp. 161-168), including

- testing and assessment;
- human resource management and training;
- evaluation.

As recommended by the study, the Department will rely to the extent possible on outside consultants and/or temporary employees to meet these requirements, particularly in areas where the work load will be high initially but then diminish.

B. STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

Many of Chapter 188's provisions empower local schools and districts to acquire resources and deploy them as they see fit. However, other sections of the Act increase accountability at the local level, calling on the Board and Department to gather additional information and to define and impose standards of educational quality. It is the Board's hope that the creative tensions between local autonomy and accountability will forge new partnerships of cooperation and collaboration between the Department and local communities. To translate this hope into a reality, the Board has used the recommendations of the management study to identify a number of ways in which the Department can strengthen its role as a service provider to local districts.

1. Increase the Department's commitment to "brokering" in assisting local school districts. The Board agrees with the finding of the management study that the Department should rely more heavily on "brokering" access to technical assistance rather than providing service directly (pp. 88-94). "Brokering" means that, rather than directly delivering service, staff link districts with available materials or with expertise provided through temporary consultants.

In following this recommendation the Department will emphasize a strategy that has evolved naturally in recent years as the best means of allocating scarce resources in the face of escalating requests for technical assistance. Over time it is expected to reduce the need for full time staff in the regional centers (p. 169). However, the new needs created by Chapter 188 will require the equivalent of 15 positions for this purpose in FY 87 (which are included in the amended request for 34 positions).

2. Review procedures for coordinating monitoring with technical assistance and brokering. The study notes that the Department must manage two challenging and potentially conflicting roles. It is primarily charged with the regulation of a significant number of state and federal statutes governing areas such as equal educational opportunity, special education, racial imbalance, bilingual education, occupational education and sex equity. Yet it is also expected to be a source of technical assistance. The study identifies a number of specific ways in which these roles may be conducted in a more complementary and collaborative way (pp. 95-99). The Department will conduct a review of existing practices to expand the use of the recommended approaches.

3. Increase the percentage of staff capable of serving a variety of program areas. The Board agrees with the management study that brokering puts a premium on staff with a broad range of skills. While the Department will continue to require specialists whose competence lies primarily in one area, it also needs to enlarge the body of personnel -- principally located in the regional centers -- who have expertise in a variety of areas (pp. 92-94, 162-163).

4. Enhance staff skills for service provider roles. Brokering demands new conceptions of the relationship between staff and constituents as well as strong interpersonal skills. The existing commitment to brokering has challenged staff to begin developing these skills. To support that effort, the Board will direct the Department to go beyond the management study recommendations to systematically identify the skills and attitudes needed by brokers and provide appropriate training.

C. BROADEN INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES

In order to support the local governance and accountability that is consistent with Chapter 188, the Board and Department will strengthen communication with local education agencies in a variety of ways:

1. Improve procedures for collecting information from local school districts. Chapter 188 requires new information to be gathered from districts for a number of purposes. The management study points to the need for improving the Department's approach to data-gathering and recommends a new set of procedures (pp. 107-109, 110-113). It also recommends the establishment of the position of Information Management Coordinator (pp. 109-110). The Board will adopt the recommended procedures in gathering new and ongoing data. The Board and new Commissioner will then consider creating the new position as part of their review of other proposed structural changes.

2. Continue making effective use of computer resources. The Department's ability to effectively manage more information depends in large measure on progress in achieving state-of-the-art automation. The management study found that the Department has demonstrated a detailed understanding of further improvements needed in its use of computers (pp. 114-115). Thus, the Board accepts the study's recommendation that it continue to make a long term commitment to the Department's development and implementation of computerized information systems.

3. Strengthen avenues of communication between school districts and the Board. The management study recommends that local districts be encouraged to expand the use of regional education center personnel to communicate with the Board via the Commissioner. The Board recognizes the usefulness of some of the recommended steps (pp. 115-118), such as increasing the representativeness of regional education councils. However, the Board believes it is necessary to go beyond the recommendation to support the strong role of school committees in the implementation of Chapter 188. To strengthen ties with these key local policy makers, the Board will increase direct communication. It will also work with school committees where possible, as well as with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

4. Strengthen the ability of regional centers to communicate with local districts. Implementation of Chapter 188 requires that the Department maintain visibility and accessibility as a service provider. The study found that some local educators do not fully understand the role of the Department (pp. 118-119). Thus, the specific steps outlined in the study will be implemented, chiefly through the regional centers.

5. Systematically assess the effectiveness of the advisory committee structure. Chapter 188 expands communication between educators and citizens through the establishment of several new advisory bodies, including a State Educational Technology Advisory Council and two special commissions. The management study found, however, that the full potential of existing Board advisory committees is not being realized and recommends reducing the fourteen existing committees to four (pp. 193-202).

The Board is reluctant to reduce the number of committees as recommended, for it is committed to maintaining active links with constituents representing special interests and perspectives. The Board will instead systematically assess the present advisory structure while creating the new bodies, looking for ways to enhance existing modes of communication. The Board will also use this inquiry to create lines of communication with the school improvement councils established by Chapter 188, which will play a role in overseeing new discretionary funds for innovation at the local level.

D. IMPROVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG KEY POLICY MAKERS
AT THE STATE LEVEL

1. Improve the ability of the Board, the Department, the Governor and the Joint Committee on Education to collaborate in the pursuit of common goals. Effective collaboration requires a foundation of trust, respect and good communication. The Board and Department are committed to doing their part to establish such a foundation for the ongoing cooperation required by implementation of Chapter 188 and their many other statutory responsibilities. Thus, the Board will take the following steps to affirm the basic division of roles outlined in the management study (pp. 181-182):

- establish regular avenues of communication to ensure that the Governor and the Legislature are informed of Board and Department activities, particularly regarding the implementation of Chapter 188;
- establish formal means of exchanging perspectives on Board priorities and the Governor's and Legislature's overall objectives;
- provide orientation and training for Board members to increase understanding of their individual and collective roles.

The Board appreciates the new resources and opportunities for education provided by Chapter 188. To take full advantage of them, the Board requests the cooperation and support of the Governor and legislative leadership in several additional areas (pp. 185-186):

- communication of clear expectations regarding the Board and any concerns about its performance;
- close communication between the Governor and the Board Chairperson and Commissioner, including timely responses to requests for decisions and information;
- regular meetings between the Governor and the Board and Commissioner to discuss educational goals;
- commitment to ongoing dialogue to resolve differences in priorities and maintain effective working relations.

2. Continue to collaborate with other state agencies and officials. Some of the requirements of Chapter 188 -- such as the provisions for early childhood education -- require coordination with other state agencies. The Department will take the necessary steps to expand current collaborative efforts (pp. 189-190).

E. INCREASE THE FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT IN MANAGING FISCAL RESOURCES

The management study has identified the need for two key amendments in fiscal decision-making responsibility if the Board and Department are to be held accountable for the implementation of Chapter 188 and for their overall performance (pp. 97-98). The Board strongly concurs and asks the Governor's Office and Legislature for support in delegating authority and accountability to the Commissioner under direction of the Board to

1. transfer funds among line items in Department operating accounts;
2. approve contracts and other expenditures presently reviewed by the Governor's Office (through delegation from the Department of Administration and Finance).

The second amendment is essential for implementing the brokering strategy that is a key element of the Department's response to Chapter 188.

II. ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT

The management study found that "the Department's overall structure is sound" (p. 137). Nonetheless, a number of recommendations with potential to strengthen the Board's leadership and the Department's management emerged from the management study and from the Board's interactions with constituents and Department staff. The Board will begin implementing some of these recommendations immediately. Others, with more far reaching implications, will be considered by the Board in collaboration with the new Commissioner.

The Board views the management plan in this area as dynamic, taking shape as the new leadership in the Department interacts with a Board that will have a new Chair and several new members.

A. STEPS THAT THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT WILL TAKE IMMEDIATELY

1. Enhance the Board's leadership role

- a. Clarify the Board's mission and principles for implementing it (pp. 44-49)
- b. Establish an integrated planning process (pp. 48-70)
- c. Strengthen communication between the Board and Department staff

2. Improve the operational effectiveness of the Board

- a. Increase the effectiveness of Board meetings (pp. 101-104)
- b. Improve orientation and training for Board members (pp. 104-106)
- c. Provide Board members with focused information (pp. 106-107)

3. Support communication and participation within the Department

- a. Involve Department staff at all levels in the evolution and implementation of the management plan
- b. Increase communication between supervisors and subordinates

- c. Explore new avenues of communication and collaboration with the collective bargaining units
 - d. Enhance communication across divisional and bureau lines
4. Increase staff skills for existing Department roles
- a. Acquire additional staff with business and management skills (pp. 161-163)
 - b. Increase training for existing responsibilities
5. Strengthen supervisory practices
- a. Develop a system to continuously monitor employee workload (pp. 125-127)
 - b. Develop a system to annually evaluate employees' performance and correlate results with promotion and compensation (pp. 127-129)
 - c. Improve coordination of clerical resources (pp. 131-132)
6. Explore relocating the Department's Central Offices from Quincy to Boston (pp. 130-131)

B. STEPS THAT THE BOARD WILL CONSIDER IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NEW COMMISSIONER

1. Clarify Board and Department roles and responsibilities (pp. 70-86)
- a. Clarify roles between the Board and the Department and procedures for communication (pp. 187-189)
 - b. Observe and enhance existing procedures for evaluating the Department's, the Commissioner's, and the Board's performance (pp. 122-125)

2. Clarify and improve key Department roles and relationships
 - a. Redefine the role of Executive Deputy Commissioner as the Deputy Commissioner for External Relations (pp. 158-161)
 - b. Clarify reporting relationships among the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner for Program Operations, and Associate Commissioners (p. 161)
 - c. Improve coordination of procedures between the central office and the regional centers (pp. 119-120)
 - d. Clarify Regional Directors' and Bureau Directors' roles (p. 71, pp. 86-88)
3. Explore reorganizing and renaming selected functions
 - a. Improve the coordination of cross-division planning, evaluation, information sharing, training and civil rights responsibilities and consolidate selected units in an Office of Program Services (pp. 142-145)
 - b. Consolidate financial management, budget, information systems, and grants processing functions (pp. 145-153)
 - c. Make selected changes in the structures and titles of the four programmatic divisions and two units (pp. 153-158)
 - d. Create the position of Information Management Coordinator
 - e. Increase capacity for quality control in public education programs and operations
4. Further analyze staffing requirements in selected areas
(pp. 169-171)
5. Review teacher certification procedures (p. 130)

III. SUPPORT NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Key elements of the management plan require the support of the Administration and/or Legislature.

- A. FULL FUNDING OF CHAPTER 188

- B. APPROVAL OF THE DEPARTMENT'S FY 87 AND FY 88 STAFFING REQUESTS (I. A.2)

- C. COOPERATION IN IMPROVING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AT THE STATE LEVEL (I. D)

- D. DELEGATION OF FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE BOARD AND DEPARTMENT IN MANAGING FISCAL RESOURCES (I. E)
 - Authority to transfer funds among line items in Department operating accounts

 - Authority to approve contracts and other expenditures presently reviewed by the Governor's Office

- E. APPROVAL OF NEW PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING WORKLOAD AND PROVIDING PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES (II. A.5)

- F. SUPPORT FOR POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL COSTS OF RELOCATING THE DEPARTMENT'S CENTRAL OFFICE FACILITIES (II. A.6)

IV. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In creating this management plan the Board has made a concerted effort to act in the spirit of Chapter 188 and to do so in the most economical way possible. The Board is committed to making this forward-looking legislation a successful vehicle for educational reform in Massachusetts by

- taking specific actions to implement Chapter 188;
- strengthening the Department's role as a service provider;
- increasing the effectiveness of the Board and Department;
- improving the Board's and Department's working relations with other key policy-making groups;
- encouraging the Administration and Legislature to provide needed support.

As the Board goes forward with this program it will regularly review its progress and make any changes necessary to insure the result we all desire: Better education for all the children of the Commonwealth.

